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Localization of Sustainable Development Goals: perspective Gopalganj District

Shahida Sultana¹

Abstract:

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted on September 27, 2015. The heads of state and government of 193 countries in the world, including Bangladesh, joined the United Nations to set 17 goals and its 169 targets and 248 indicators, known as the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of freeing the world from poverty, protecting the planet, and achieving peace and prosperity. Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is the central and transformative promise of the Sustainable Development Goals. The working committee formed by the Prime Minister's Office has adopted 39+1 indicators suitable for the Bangladesh context out of the total.

The implementation part of the SDG is much more important. Some indicators of the SDG are implemented centrally, and some are locally. The model discussed in this article considers only the indicators applicable for local implementation. As the geolocation and geoeconomic conditions are not the same in all parts of the country, the implementation action plan will not be similar across the whole country.

In this article, the localization process of SDG in the administrative unit has been explained with the example of Gopalganj district. The national target, local achievement, the gap between target and achievement, the stipulated time frame, and the annual performance agreement of the individual institutions and officers are linked together in this model.

Finally, it is to express that the data used in this write-up is derived from different sources, like primary and secondary. Due to local data constraints, some calculations were done depending on the national scenario and local observations. However, to show the result of the calculation is not the objective of this write-up, but rather to express the model that, if we want to attain the SDGs within the stipulated time, we need to analyze the present status of SDG implementation for every single indicator. The future action plan will quantify the target to achieve in each year, depending on the 'gap'.

Introduction:

The dream of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was to free the people of this country from poverty and build a prosperous golden Bangla. His dream of that golden Bangla is now on the verge of fulfillment under the visionary

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leadership of the daughter of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Hasina. Shaikh Hasina's 'inclusive development model' contributed a lot to uplifting the living standards of marginalized people as well as attaining the goals of the SDG.

Bangladesh makes use of the required resources to carry out the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 8th Five-Year Plan's general framework, which essentially lays out plans to fully implement the SDGs, demonstrates the honesty and sincere goodwill of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The implementation procedure involves all government ministries and departments. It is already halfway past for the SDGs to be achieved by 2030. Its development in Bangladesh, however, is encouraging. As a result, Sheikh Hasina, the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, received the renowned Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) SDG Progress Award during the UN session at the end of 2021. The COVID outbreak, which began in December 2019, has completely upended the planet.

The COVID-19 study caused the world poverty rate to increase from 6.7% in 2019 to 7.2% in 2020. The lockdown was announced at the beginning of COVID-19, and the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina immediately announced a special support package to keep low-income people and industrial factories running. She also quickly arranged vaccinations for everyone at government expense. As a result, the impact of Corona in Bangladesh was unable to disrupt the ongoing process of reducing poverty in that way. As a result, Bangladesh's average GDP growth in FY 2020–21 was practically unchanged at 6.4%. Corona is anticipated to have a minimal influence on Bangladesh's implementation of the SDGs. However, Bangladesh has been hit severely by the surge of rising commodity prices, much like the rest of the world, as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Economic instability and sustainability are pervasive throughout the world, which may impede efforts to end poverty, eliminate hunger, improve health and education outcomes, promote peace, and advance all of the SDGs.

Given the ongoing conflicts, epidemics, and climate change, the need for SDG implementation has grown more critical. There is no other way than for local stakeholders including local government, NGOs, civil society, and the local administration to play an active part if we are to fulfill our international obligations on schedule.

Bangladesh is currently completing the LDC graduation process. The three elements influencing graduation are a growth in per capita income, the Human Development Index, and the economic and environmental vulnerability index. By meeting every requirement, Bangladesh will be classified as a least developed nation (LDC) by 2026. The three criteria for LDC graduation and the SDG indicators are closely correlated. Therefore, Bangladesh's preparation for LDC graduation will significantly affect our SDGs. On the other hand, if the SDGs are achieved, it can be said that per capita income will rise automatically, a human development index will be set at a satisfactory level with the improvement of people's living standards, and the level of economic and environmental vulnerability will be reduced to what is expected.

The SDGs actually have their roots in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were put into effect by the UN between 2000 and 2015 and for which Bangladesh received high accolades from the international world for its successes in reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health. Climate change, peace, and justice were recently added as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are in line with Bangladesh's priorities as a developing country.

Every NPT has a predetermined timeline for completing the indicator. To guarantee that each SDG goal is accomplished within the allotted time frame, a comprehensive action plan is required. The Father of the Nation was born and honored in the fortunate neighborhood of Gopalganj. The Gopalganj district administration, along with local public representatives, the upazila administration, different development partners, and civil society, have been working for poverty alleviation, development, and to ensure prosperity in Gopalganj under the direction of the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In addition to the standard government-directed efforts, the Gopalganj local administration and community members are helping to localize the SDGs. For instance, the Gopalganj district administration oversaw the creation of a database that contained data on over 3,19,000 families in the area.

This information bank makes it simple to execute programs to reduce poverty, train new employees from every household, offer suitable social safety net chances, keep an eye on educational initiatives, and concentrate on reaching a number of Sustainable Development Goals. Similar to the family card database, the district has implemented a number of creative initiatives in recent years. All of them are a component of the plan for localizing the SDGs.

Localization Model:

The district administration is a significant government institution. It is established that the combined activities of Bangladesh's 64 districts serve as a gauge of the country's overall progress. As a result, although while the central government is in charge of implementing the SDGs, the 64 districts' government offices are also accountable for doing so. In addition, a framework should be in place to guarantee that the advantages of Bangladesh's tremendous economic growth are felt by all social strata. The local administration's importance in achieving this goal cannot be questioned. Additionally, there are a number of challenges associated with both development and poverty reduction. Since the majority of the poor population lives in rural areas, their support is crucial in this regard.

The most crucial phrase in the SDG implementation level is localization. The majority of goals must be accomplished via local level planning and actions. A flawless strategy must be created at the district level based on local requirements for the effective implementation of SDGs. The last line/marginal inhabitants of the struggling locality must be taken into consideration because the SDG's major goal is to leave no one behind. Because of this, the plan ought to differ from district to district.

The operations of all government and non-government offices, as well as local government institutions, are constantly coordinated by local administration. Making a plan to attain the goal and taking the necessary activities are a joint and comprehensive process, not the responsibility of any one organization. Therefore, the District administration plays a crucial part in putting the SDGs into practice locally. A unique component of its strategy is involving stakeholders at the local, national, and international levels in the implementation of the SDGs. One of the objectives of the sustainable development agenda is to strengthen, activate, energize, and motivate local institutions and individuals to achieve the aim of sustainable development.

Because the SDGs have local relevance to rural poverty, education, health care, environmental degradation, combating climate change, women's empowerment, clean water, or other agendas, the "SDG Localization Framework" has been developed under the General Economics Department (GED) of the Planning Commission.

Since the district administration oversees local operations, coordinates and monitors the work of all district departments and ministries, and collaborates with communities' public, officials and development partners, it is able to create an effective local action plan to close the gap and achieve the SDGs.

The fact that not all districts will benefit from the same development plan is important to note. For instance, it can be said that over the past ten years, numerous government initiatives have resulted in a 10% decrease in Bangladesh's extreme poverty rate. However, not all regions have had the same pace of poverty reduction. While the rate of those who are severely poor is roughly 5.7% in some areas, it reaches nearly 15% in the Gopalganj district. As a result, if a single technique is employed, it will not be equally beneficial in reducing poverty in all districts. Instead, by creating a strategy for that specific location in the underdeveloped districts, it is possible to attain a certain aim across the entire country.

In this regard, there is an old tale. The average depth of this river is 4 feet, according to a person sitting on the bank. The man, who was roughly six feet tall, chose to cross the river without knowing the specifics because of his height. After traveling farther, he discovered that while the depth is generally 4 feet, there are certain locations where it is only 2 feet deep and others where it is up to 12 feet deep. As a result, the 12 feet of depth space must be considered.

The localization term of the SDG merits particular attention in this regard. The basic goal of SDG localization is to make progress locally and nationally. As a result, it is crucial to consider the issues listed in each indicator into account locally and make plans accordingly. In this situation, data collection is required to determine the present state of the issues mentioned in each indicator in each location or district. Since each indication has a set of particular goals and deadlines, the goal must be met within those timeframes or annually. The following are the general considerations:

1. Current Situation
2. Target to reach

3. Determining the gap
4. Calculating the timeline
5. The yearly action plan

Other factors taken into account in this situation include figuring out which agencies or organizations will actually take action to achieve the aim of the particular indicator. The departments or organizations will create the overall action plan, divide it into time periods, publish the yearly action plan, and execute their individual yearly Performance Agreements (APAs). Consider using the diagram below:

1. Gap between (SDG Target - Current Status of Achievement)
2. Gap/year = planning to perform annually
3. Department selection and goal setting for the specific organization or department
4. Announcement of activities in achieving the goal/target.
5. Signature of the Annual Performance Agreement (APA)
6. Budgetary Need
7. Budgetary allocation made by the relevant Ministries/Organizations

It is noteworthy that the localization of SDG requires the budget to reflect the unique needs of the area. The budget assigning authority must carefully analyze the gap and take the local annual implementation plan into account. As an illustration, consider SDG Goal 4 and NPT 4.A.1. By 2030, every school must have access to electricity, the internet, safe drinking water, and single-sex restrooms. While 98.4% of schools nationwide now have power facilities, 100% of the schools in the Gopalganj district do. While of the target, 81.01% has been met for internet usage nationally, only 56.3%, 93.8%, and 40.1% have been met for internet, clean drinking water, and single sex sanitation in Gopalganj district, respectively. In order to meet the deadline, set forth for Gopalganj district in the stated target, it is still need to link 495 schools to the internet, provide safe drinking water in 70 schools, and provide single-sex restrooms in 679 schools, according to this indicator.

Although the indicator is related to education, these tasks will be carried out mainly by the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology and the Ministry of Local Government. As a result, in the Gopalganj district action plan of the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology, at least 124 schools should be brought under the internet every year and the annual action plan agreement should be executed and this amount should be ensured in this sector in the budget of the ministry/department. Otherwise, the target will not be achieved in the stipulated time. Similarly, Gopalganj District Public Health Department should provide safe drinking water to at least 35 new schools every year and at least 170 schools should be brought under single sex sanitation and APA should be executed accordingly. If the number of schools increases during this period, the annual action plan should be prepared taking into account the increased number of schools. The same calculation is required for all other districts as well and the Ministries have to confirm the annual disbursements by calculating the district targets.

Each department must annually sign a work plan agreement with its superior authority. Incompetence on the part of the Office or Officer shall be deemed upon failure to perform obligations in accordance with this Agreement. However, these implementation agreements are frequently either not planned in accordance with the SDG targets or do not reflect them. Because the status and gaps at the district level are not identified, no action plan is created with a practical estimate of SDG localization.

As a result, despite the fact that SDG localization has been discussed for a very long time, the real localization situation is still unclear. Only the national image is reflected in each report. Once more, the APA of the district or Upazilas level officers does not ensure that any particular thing will be implemented. Gopalganj District has already carried out actions to determine the existing state and the gap with respect to SDG indicators at the initiative of the District Administration. The district's targets can all be achieved within the allotted time frame if each department follows the gap in their yearly performance agreement. Similar to how the national goal will be reached by adding the accomplishments of each district, if this strategy is followed in each district, no one will be left behind. It should be noted that some indicators do not offer the possibility of determining the gaps differently based on districts and Upazilas; in such cases, the relevant ministries will take the necessary steps.

SDG Localization Model for Gopalganj

Two important characteristics define this model of SDG localization. First, this model will examine the development gap between Gopalganj district's progress and the national SDG achievement and targets, and then it will design stratified plans and programs at the district, upazila, union, and village levels to close the gap and reach the target indicators. As the gap analysis is done in Gopalganj district, initiatives can be taken to address local deficits, and mechanisms can be established to retain those areas where the situation is better than the target. There is a focal point for the SDGs' implementation within each government ministry. However, since the majority of the work is done at the field level, it is challenging to plan and oversee it practically at the central level. It must assess locally how the implementation of the SDGs is progressing.

Second, at the start of each fiscal year, government employees who work at the district and Upazila levels submit Annual Performance Agreements (APA). The five-year plan of the government, the SDGs, and other plans and policies must all be incorporated into the plan as goals to accomplish in that specific year. This approach eliminates the need for additional personnel or manpower.

The SDG tracker should compile the monthly progress of all achievement from the field; this will provide a true assessment of SDG achievement and local conditions. The national target will be automatically attained if this SDG localization process is successful, leaving no one behind.

According to this concept, if in an Upazila there is a target to train 700 ultra-poor people, it will only have to work with 100 beneficiaries if the Upazila is divided into 7

development ministries that deal with poverty reduction. They might choose the families for their own activities with effective departmental collaboration. If not, the 700 people will need to be handled by all the departments. There could be a potential for duplication as well as a chance of leaving some families untouched as a result.

The local government representatives, the department's own field workers or officers, or any other cutting-edge processes can identify the targeted beneficiaries who will be chosen for which training, skill-building, or income-generating activities. In accordance with this approach, district and Upazila government offices will take steps to track and monitor the actions taken by the families to generate money or a means of subsistence, utilizing the training and skills supplied by the department. At the same time, the division or organization will offer any additional assistance needed to ensure the sustainability of its income-generating initiatives.

In this plan, local progress is created for each goal level versus national progress, using data from the District Statistics Department, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, and other relevant departments, in order to assess the gap and schedule how to finish the remaining tasks in the remaining time. In some domains, data limits become problematic. Since there are times when local data is lacking, national data has been taken into consideration. The accuracy of the data has a big impact on how well the SDG localization plan works.

SDG Implementation Model



Equation:

Gap (Target-Achievement)/Rest of the year for implementation = yearly targeted action plan

SDG Localization in Gopalganj Aligning with NPT

Goal 1: No poverty

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
1	1.2	1.2.1	extreme poverty < 3%
2	-		national poverty <5.6%

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
3	2.2	2.2.1	Stunting under 5 years to 12%
4	-		cultivable land min 55% total land

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
5	3.2	3.2.2	neonatal mortality rate to 12 per 1,000
6	-	3.2.1	under-5 mortality rate to 25 per 1,000
7	3.1	3.1.1	maternal mortality ratio to 70 per 100,000
8	3.6	3.6.1	death rate to road traffic to 1.2 per 100,000

Goal 4: Quality Education

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
9	4.1	4.1.1	Completion of 100% PSC
10	-	-	Completion of 100% JSC
11	4.4	4.a.1	proportion of students in technical level >20%
12	4.a	4.a.1	100% access of elec., internet, d. water, sanitation
13	-	4.a.1	100% adapted infrastructure for disabled

Goal 5: Gender Equity

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
14	5.3	5.3.1	women marriagebefore 15 to zero
15	-	-	women marriagebefore 18 to 10%
16	5.4	5.4.1	Female labor increase to 50%

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

NPT	Target	Indicators	Comments
17	61	6.1.1	100% use of safe drinking water
18	62	7.1.1	100% use of safe sanitation